

Dozens of premature babies evacuated from Gaza to Egypt

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Cairo, November 20 (RHC)-- A group of 28 premature babies has been evacuated from al-Shifa Hospital in the besieged Gaza Strip and taken to Egypt for urgent treatment as Palestinian officials say Israeli forces have attacked another hospital in northern Gaza.

The newborns had been patients at al-Shifa, Gaza's largest medical facility, where several others had died after their incubators stopped working for a lack of fuel as medical services collapse during the Israeli military's ground and air assault on Gaza City.

The babies were transported on Sunday to al-Helal Emirati Maternity Hospital in Rafah in southern Gaza, so their condition could be stabilised before making the trip to Egypt through the Rafah border crossing on Monday. “Three babies still remain at the Emirati hospital and continue to receive treatment,” a World Health Organization (WHO) spokesperson told the Reuters news agency. “All babies are fighting serious infections and continue needing health care.”

Last week, Israeli forces seized al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical facility in Gaza, to search for what they said was a Hamas tunnel network and command centre built underneath the complex. Hamas has denied the allegations.

During the Israeli operation, hundreds of patients, medical staff and displaced people left al-Shifa at the weekend and moved to the southern Gaza Strip.

Since al-Shifa doctors have raised the alarm about the situation at the hospital for premature babies and the lack of clean water and medicines in the neonatal ward, eight infants have died, according to hospital officials.

At another hospital in northern Gaza, at least 12 people were killed by artillery fire on Monday and dozens wounded, the Palestinian Ministry of Health said. The ministry said hundreds of people were trapped at the facility, which was encircled by Israeli tanks.

Reporting from the hospital, journalist Anas al-Sharif described the scenes inside as “chaotic.” “There is an overwhelming state of panic among patients,” he told Al Jazeera. “Victims are piling up on the floor.”

The WHO’s chief said the United Nations agency was “appalled” by the attack on the Indonesian Hospital. “Health workers and civilians should never have to be exposed to such horror, and especially while inside a hospital,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Indonesia’s foreign minister condemned the attack on the hospital, which was built in 2016 and funded by Indonesia, and called it a “clear violation of international humanitarian laws.”

“All countries, especially those that have close relations with Israel, must use all their influence and capabilities to urge Israel to stop its atrocities,” Retno Marsudi said. “We are very concerned about the fate of our colleagues and the fate of wounded and patients as well as [displaced] people who may have still [been] sheltering there. No ambulances can reach them, and we’re afraid the wounded will die,” said Nahed Abu Taaema, director of Nasser Hospital in southern Gaza.

Like most hospitals and clinics in the northern half of the Gaza Strip, the Indonesian Hospital has largely ceased operations but is sheltering patients, staff and displaced people who have sought shelter at the site after Israel launched its assault on Gaza last month.

As fighting continues between Israeli forces and Hamas in Gaza, US and Israeli officials said a Qatari-mediated deal to free some of the captives held in the Palestinian enclave and pause fighting temporarily to enable aid deliveries to stricken civilians was edging closer.

About 240 hostages were taken during a deadly assault on southern Israel by Hamas on October 7. About 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed, according to Israeli tallies. After the attack, Israel promised to topple the armed group, which has governed Gaza since 2007, and it launched a devastating bombardment and ground offensive on Gaza.

At least 13,000 Palestinians have been killed, including at least 5,500 children, according to Palestinian officials.



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